

Representative Town Meeting Study Committee Report

1. Introduction

At its 17 July 2007 meeting, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) appointed a committee to study the pros and cons of a Representative Town Meeting (RTM) form of government for the Town of Westford and to make a recommendation on whether the Town should pursue the concept.¹ In addition, the Committee was to study and make a recommendation as to the appropriate day and time to hold the Annual Town Meeting (ATM). The committee was to have five members, including a representative of the League of Women Voters of Westford (LWVW) and four citizens at large. A member of the BOS was to be an ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee.

The members selected by the BOS were: John Cunningham, Buffie Diercks, Marianne Fleckner (LWVW alternate), George Murray (chairman), Robert Phillips (secretary), and Bob Price (LWVW representative). (Buffie Diercks had presented a citizen petition at the 6 May 2007 ATM to change the bylaws to move ATM from Saturday to Tuesday and Thursday.) Bob Jefferies and Valerie Wormell served jointly as the BOS members. All members are long-time Town Meeting (TM) attendees and political observers who have served on other Town boards or committees.

No deadline was specified in the Committee's charge from the BOS for completion of its report to the BOS, but the Committee's self-imposed goal was to publish the report before the 2008 Fall TM. The Committee also decided at an early meeting to expand its charter to include making general recommendations in its final report for the improvement of TM.

The RTM Study Committee meetings were generally held the first Tuesday of each month at the Millennium School. The meetings were posted at Town Hall and meeting minutes were taken and submitted to the Town Clerk in conformance with the Open Meeting Law.

2. Definitions

Town Meeting (TM) is the legislative branch of Westford's government. It has two primary responsibilities: establishing an annual budget by voting to appropriate money for all Town departments, and maintaining the Town's local statutes—its bylaws—by voting on proposed modifications.

At Open Town Meeting (OTM), all registered voters of the Town of Westford are legislators who may attend, speak and vote at the Town Meeting. Because it is held on an announced date (as determined by bylaw), Annual Town Meeting (ATM) has no quorum requirement. Special

¹ An earlier attempt to create such a committee was unsuccessful. From the 1994 Annual Town Report description of the 7 May 1994 Annual Town Meeting: Article 8 "failed for the lack of a majority that the Selectmen be and hereby authorized and directed to appoint a committee of eleven (11) members whose function and duty shall be to study the present form of Town Meeting in Westford, including the advisability of establishing a Representative Town Meeting form of government and to report its findings and recommendations to the Town at the next Annual Town Meeting."

Town Meeting (STM), which can be called at any time by the BOS with little warning, currently has a quorum requirement of 200 voters.

At Representative Town Meeting (RTM), typically all registered voters could attend and speak at the meeting, but only the elected representatives of each precinct would be permitted to vote. Each of Westford's six precincts would elect one-third of its representatives annually for three-year terms. The total number of voting representatives of representative town meeting would be about 200.

For example:

$$\begin{aligned} & (12 \text{ representatives elected each year per precinct}) \times (3 \text{ years per term}) \times (6 \text{ precincts}) \\ & = (216 \text{ representatives}) \end{aligned}$$

Each of the six precincts would hold an election every year to choose one third of its representatives to serve for the next three years. Candidates for representative would have to collect on their nomination papers at least, say, ten signatures of voters in their own precincts to get their names on the ballot for those precincts. The history of RTM in Billerica, Chelmsford, Needham, and Reading shows that some precincts often fail to field a full slate of candidates. Vacant seats in a precinct are typically filled by voters selected by the other representatives of that precinct.

Of the 298 towns in Massachusetts with a TM form of government, 261 have OTM and 37 have RTM as of the date of this report. The last town to change from OTM to RTM was Chelmsford in 1989; in 2008, North Andover passed a non-binding referendum to appoint a charter review committee to study abandoning OTM for a city council form of government. Three towns that had RTM—Athol, Seekonk, and Webster—have reverted to OTM.

3. Process

During its initial meetings, the Committee decided that the best approach to analyze the OTM-RTM issue was to first identify the major problems with OTM in Westford and then to determine if a change from OTM to RTM would solve those problems and at the same time not introduce any new problems.

The Committee collected, reviewed, and discussed the relevant material listed in the Annotated Bibliography. It also interviewed a number of officials from Westford and other towns to hear their perspectives on the OTM-RTM issue. Several Westford voters came to the meetings to express their concerns directly to the Committee; others sent email.

The Committee also created a survey to solicit public opinion on the perceived problems with OTM, the perceived advantages of RTM, and the operation of TM in general, including the month and day of the week it is held. Given the resources available to the Committee, it was clear at the outset that this survey could not be considered scientific—the sample would be too small and consist only of those respondents with access to the Town website where the survey

would be posted. Nevertheless, the Committee felt the comments of even these few respondents would be worth collecting and reviewing for additional ideas.

The Committee was fortunate in that its members were always able to discuss the issues in a collegial atmosphere and to reach an amicable consensus. The Committee enjoyed its work and felt enriched by the opportunity to research and debate the nature of TM. It is hoped that the recommendations and suggestions recorded here will be helpful in creating a more workable Town government.

At its 26 August 2008 meeting, the Committee approved this report for submission to the BOS.

4. Recommendations

The Committee strongly believes that the Town of Westford should take whatever measures are possible to improve the current OTM form of local government. It also believes that having a deliberative, participatory TM is more important than having an efficient one.

After due consideration, the Committee recommends:

- Keeping the current OTM form of government and not changing to an RTM form of government;
- Keeping Saturday as the initial day for ATM as mandated in the current Town bylaws;
- Moving ATM from May back to March or at least April.

The Committee feels the main general concerns with TM are currently:

- Low voter attendance (and the failure to make and maintain STM quorum requirements);
- Voter blocs “stacking” meetings for specific warrant articles.

The Committee believes the low voter attendance problem would be eased by:

1. Improving the quality of communication between the Town Manager (representing the BOS) and the voters both before and during TM.
 - a. Providing better, more timely information to voters before TM, exploiting all possible modes—newspaper, cable TV, public forum, Town-wide email, Town website, etc.
 - b. Adopting a Town brand—logo, tag line, color pallet, type font, layout—to standardize and professionalize the format of all its publications, including the *Finance Committee Report and Recommendations for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant*, to distinguish them from any other material received before elections and TM.
 - c. Having the Town Manager make a thorough State-of-the-Town presentation at the beginning of TM that provides an informative introduction for all the business to follow.
 - d. Providing clear presentations at TM laying out the options and their ramifications for each article on the warrant.

2. Asking the Finance Committee to comment on all articles on the TM warrant. After all, every article has some financial impact on the Town and the Fin Com has reviewed each one diligently and could express an educated opinion.
3. Requiring each Town board, committee, and department to have at least one member present throughout the entire TM who is qualified to represent that board, committee, or department.
4. Asking an impartial, non-governmental organization such as the LWVW to interview the proponents and opponents of each warrant article and to publish a warrant review that would provide a succinct discussion of the impact of each article passing or failing to pass at TM.
5. Shifting the date for ATM back to March or at least to April when potential conflicts with good weather and sports and social events would be less likely. (It is not clear how this shift would affect Town elections.)
6. Directing all municipal departments to not schedule any social, athletic, cultural, or informational events for the dates of ATM.
7. Continuing to hold the first day of TM on Saturday.
8. Reinstating childcare in the Abbot cafeteria during TM.
9. Offering a reasonably priced lunch of some kind to induce voters to stay and not go home.
10. Staging other events at Abbot to attract voters on TM day.

The Committee feels there is no solution to the “stacking” issue; in fact, the Committee is not convinced it is a problem:

1. “Stacking” is a democratic option available to all voters on all sides of a controversial warrant article.
2. “Stacking” would be mitigated by better communication and a better-informed electorate.
3. There should be no rules about when individual voters or groups of voters can enter or leave TM (unless a vote head count is in process).

5. Discussion

The following sections discuss the details of the Committee’s recommendations and concerns.

5.1 Representative Town Meeting

The Committee was frankly surprised by the overwhelming support by residents to keep Westford’s OTM form of government. It seems that as unhappy as voters say they are about the issues of maintaining a quorum and “stacking” the TM floor on controversial votes, they are reluctant to forsake the devil they know. They feel that exchanging OTM for RTM will only exchange one set of problems for another and would actually lead to a loss of representation—their representation. Would RTM representatives actually canvass their precincts or merely vote their own minds?

Some respondents to the survey expressed dismay at having to become a “politician” to serve as a representative at TM. Others suggested that the 200 elected representatives would likely turn

out to be the same 200 voters who sit through to the end of TM now. (This likelihood was confirmed by several town managers who had experienced the OTM-RTM transition in their towns.)

The strongest support for RTM came from town managers who liked dealing with a relatively static group of TM representatives whose response on an issue could be predicted and prepared for. They felt communication with the elected representatives was easier than trying to reach the small fraction of the entire voting population that will actually show up at the next TM.

A change to RTM raises such issues as quorum requirements, recall elections, vacancy filling, and non-representatives addressing RTM, none of which is discussed here.

Changing OTM to RTM makes sense for a town grown too large, where too many people show up at a hall that can't seat them all. This may be the case in North Andover; having too many TM attendees is not the problem in Westford—it's having too few. The Abbot gym has a legal maximum capacity of 1050 people (equivalent to about seven percent of Westford's voters), a limit that has been reached three times in the past thirty years.²

5.2 Annual Town Meeting Date

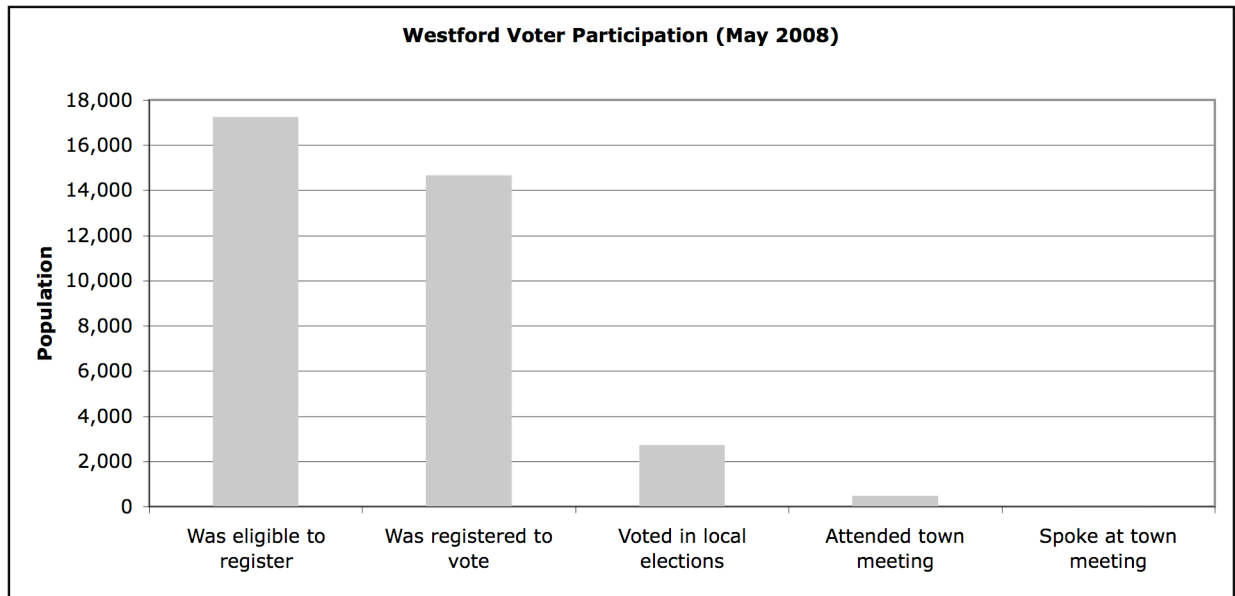
There was general agreement among voters and Town officials that holding ATM in May, when the weather is suddenly pleasant and outdoor sports activities have begun, makes it difficult to attract and maintain a quorum for any embedded STM during ATM. It was felt that holding ATM in April or even March would be more attractive to the voters. Historically, Westford held ATM in March from 1948 until 1974 when it was moved to May. Town officials struggling to estimate state support levels and generate realistic budgets complain that they must have as much time as possible to collect realistic data, but the visiting experts said this is not really the case.

The choice of days to hold TM was not conclusive among the survey respondents; all day Saturday was just as popular as two weekday evenings. The reasons for the choice of times was diverse: parents of young children can't get all-day baby sitters on Saturday; elder voters can't or don't want to risk driving after sundown on weeknights; families want to attend social events such as weddings and recitals held on Saturdays; workers can't stay up late on weeknights; etc.

5.3 Low Voter Attendance

As Bryan (Reference 1) illustrates clearly in his extensive study of decades of TMs in Vermont, voter participation in TM is consistently high in small towns (25% or more for populations less than 500), but dramatically smaller in larger towns (2.5% or less for populations greater than 4000). Westford (population 20,787) is not unique then in its struggle to gather even one or two percent of its voters for a TM.

² On 15 Oct 1981, 1416 (out of 7709) voters attended a STM at Westford Academy (WA) to discuss a proposed hazardous waste facility at the Fletcher quarry. On 3 Oct 1991, 1592 voters attended a STM at WA to defeat an article that would have reduced the School Department Operations and Maintenance budget by \$245,000. On 5 May 1992, the Fire Chief determined that the Abbot gym was overcrowded and ordered the room cleared; ATM resumed at WA.



Low voter attendance at TM is only one symptom of the decline in citizen participation in local government. The list of volunteers for Town boards and committees is short, with many townspeople serving on multiple boards and committees. While this helps communication among these boards and committees, it does limit the influx of new ideas from the community.

Except when a controversial article on the warrant galvanizes the voters, it is often difficult to attract and retain enough voters to meet and maintain the quorum requirement of STM. Would changing from OTM to RTM solve attendance and participation issues? To quote from a paper written about Needham's RTM problems (Reference 3):

A report published by the Massachusetts Legislature Research Council in 1971 indicated that absenteeism in Representative Town Meetings reflects (1) apathy or satisfaction with "the ways things are done"; (2) a sense that the Town Meeting Members' votes "don't count" because of state mandates and because of the financial independence of School Committees; (3) limited Town Meeting Member interest in Town Meeting Warrant Articles; (4) conflicting engagements; (5) baby-sitter problems; (6) inclement weather; (7) inadequate knowledge of town government; (8) age and illness ; (9) poor Town Meeting facilities; and (10) the lack of a local newspaper to inform voters and stimulate their interest in community affairs.³

In other words, elected representatives don't attend RTM for the same reasons voters don't attend OTM. Quorum requirements in some towns have had to be reduced to permit RTM to function.

Some voters arrive at TM ill prepared and during the proceedings become confused and alienated, convinced Town officials have a hidden agenda; other voters arrive well prepared and

³ Massachusetts Legislative Research Council, *The Form of Government in Large Towns*, House No, 5302 (1971), 247 pp., at p.157.

become frustrated with the pace and the process, convinced Town officials are incompetent planners. Better communication with voters before and during TM would ease this situation. And as one anonymous respondent put it, “One purpose of TM is to educate the voting population: it teaches forbearance and rewards patience and collaboration.”

The seating in the Abbot gym is universally acknowledged to be uncomfortable either on the bleachers or on the folding chairs. Surprisingly, however, respondents claimed this was not a factor in their decision to attend TM or not.

Some respondents indicated unhappiness with the current fixed microphone system with its waiting lines. Speakers get nervous waiting in line (despite the best efforts of the Moderator to make everyone feel comfortable) and some voters therefore choose to remain seated and silent. The use of roving microphones could allow voters to address TM standing at their seats where they feel more comfortable. The Moderator might consider this a worthwhile experiment to try at one TM. (High school students could implement this roving microphone system as a community service project.)

5.4 Town Meeting “Stacking”

When a controversial article on the warrant comes up for discussion, TM floor is often suddenly flooded with voters (notified by cable TV or cell phones) who vote as a bloc for or against the controversial article, and then just as suddenly disappear before the next article is taken up. This “stacking” of TM angers not only those voters who voluntarily endure the entire meeting, but also those voters who chose not to attend at all and those who failed to organize their own bloc to back the opposing view.

The issue of “stacking” is one that dates from the dawn of democracy when the Greeks used the tactic to influence voting outcome at their outdoor meetings. In 2500 years of democracy, no practical solution to avoid “stacking” has been developed. While RTM might seem to prevent the “stacking” of a TM, the accidental or even deliberate overrepresentation of retirees, unionized town employees, parents of school-age children, or other special interest groups can create temporary or permanent voting blocs in RTM. The filling of vacant seats by precinct caucuses provides an opportunity for the “stacking” of RTM. In addition, representatives may become targets of concerted lobbying at election time.

In some respects, the TM attendees who “stack” a meeting show very desirable voter traits:

- They are informed on the warrant article under discussion;
- They are often willing to address TM to explain their position eloquently and passionately;
- They actually attend the meeting and vote.

Unfortunately, the meeting “stackers” often leave after casting their one vote, but all TM attendees are entitled to leave the meeting at any point, once their articles of interest or concern are acted on. Moreover, all voters have the opportunity to organize voting blocs to support their views on an issue.

6. Contributors

The Committee held 17 meetings and interviewed several subject matter experts including (in order of appearance):

- Ellen Harde, Westford Town Moderator;
- Steve Ledoux, then Westford Town Manager;
- Bernie Lynch, Lowell City Manager and former Chelmsford Town Manager;
- Dave Murray, Westford Finance Committee Chair;
- Anita Scheiper, Lincoln Assistant Town Administrator;
- Donna VanderClock, Weston Town Manager;
- Peter Hechenbleikner, Reading Town Manager;
- Ellen Rawlings, Billerica RTM representative and former Billerica Selectman;
- Al Tosti, Arlington Finance Committee.

The Committee gratefully acknowledges the time, effort, and information these clearly dedicated public officials contributed to the study.

The Committee also acknowledges the contribution of those voters who came to the meetings and expressed their opinions:

- Tom O'Donnell,
- Kate Hollister,
- Kelly Ross,
- Rachel Amato.

The Committee appreciates as well the opinions and comments recorded by the 157 anonymous, but obviously concerned citizens who responded to the on-line survey posted on the Town website by the Committee. Those citizens who chose to submit their comments via email are also thanked.

Finally, the Committee wishes to thank Chris McClure, Town Technology Director, who created the on-line survey and reduced the data for easier analysis.

7. Annotated Bibliography

The Committee strongly recommends to those seriously interested in the subject the following two books on how TMs operate and how they can be improved:

1. *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How it Works*, Frank Bryan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Results of 30 years of observing and recording data about Vermont TMs, by Professor Frank Bryan of the University of Vermont. Bryan deployed his students to attend and monitor TMs throughout Vermont and studied the influence of many factors, including

town population, geographic size, weather, timing of the meeting, and participation by gender and age. Its treatment of the data is highly statistical.

2. *All Those in Favor: Rediscovering the Secrets of Town Meeting and Community*, Susan Clark & Frank Bryan. Montpelier: RavenMark Publication, 2005.

Building on the content of Bryan's earlier book (Reference 1), Bryan and Clark report his findings in a concise, highly readable format and make practical recommendations for improving attendance and participation at TM.

For more information on these books, visit: <http://www.uvm.edu/~fbryan/academic.html>

3. *A Representative Town Meeting for the 21st Century: A Memorandum to the Town Meeting Study Committee Authorized by Vote of the 2005 Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Needham, Massachusetts Under Article 64 of the Warrant Thereof*, James Hugh Powers, Town Meeting Member, Precinct F. August 1, 2006.

A very informative paper on the problems of RTM, including absenteeism of representatives during TMs and lack of candidates for election to RTM. It provides a wealth of information about forms of town government in Massachusetts and state laws governing TMs.

<http://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentView.asp?DID=1785>

4. Chapter 12, Governance, Draft of Westford Comprehensive Plan, 13 pp.

The draft provides a good overview of the governmental structures of the cities and towns in Massachusetts and an analysis of the effectiveness of Westford's government.

http://www.westford-ma.gov/pages/government/towndepartments/boardsandcommittees/WestfordMA_masterplan/documents/draftmasterplan/

5. "Is open Town Meeting viable? Some consider updating charters," Kytja Weir, *Boston Globe*, January 3, 2008.

Report of George Vozeolas' efforts, through a petition drive, to form a charter review commission in North Andover to consider switching from OTM to a Strong Town Manager/Council form of government.

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/01/03/is_open_town_meeting_viable/

6. "North Andover Town Meeting, Love It Or Leave It," George Vozeolas, *The Valley Patriot*, Vol. 7, Issue 13, December 2007.

Additional criticism of North Andover's OTM, using examples from recent meetings.

<http://www.valleypatriot.com/VP120607townmeeting.html>

7. Interview notes from a telecom with George Vozeolas, George Murray, 6 January 2008. Vozeolas is highly critical of OTM, and almost as critical of RTM government.
8. Westford Board of Selectmen's Meeting Minutes, 25 October 2005.

Discussion among the board members, the Moderator, and the League of Women Voters recapping issues of public notification about town meeting, and how to increase attendance at town meeting.

9. "Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature," Michael X. Delli Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2004, pp. 315-344.

Not for the faint of heart, but an extensive bibliography of reviewed literature. Includes a strong endorsement of the purpose of OTM:

...Talking in public with other citizens is a form of participation, one that arguably provides the opportunity for individuals to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern....

<http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/papers/2005/WP-05-08.pdf>

10. League of Women Voters of Westford "Town Meeting Position – 1997."

The League took the position:

We believe that the town should consider a change to representative town meeting only if all those who wish to attend, speak and vote at an open town meeting can no longer be accommodated in that forum.

http://www.westford.com/lwv/where_stand.shtml

11. Presentation made by Buffie Diercks in support of Article 19 of the 6 May 2007 ATM to change the time of ATM from Saturday to Tuesdays and Thursdays.
12. "Several Options Exist for Changing Local Government Structure," Marilyn Contreas, *Municipal Advocate*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 22-26.

A review of the mechanisms provided by Massachusetts law for changing governmental structures.

13. Position Paper – Massachusetts Moderators Association, “The Home Rule Act and Town Meeting Government: Representative Town Meeting vs. City Council,” 18 May 2005.

The key position is:

The institution of New England town meeting has survived for over 372 years. While such an ancient institution as town meeting may have to modify its traditions as communities become more urbanized, the role of citizen participation and the collective decision making should not be compromised in the name of efficiency.

8. Abbreviations

ATM	Annual Town Meeting
BOS	Board of Selectmen
LWVW	League of Women Voters of Westford
OTM	Open Town Meeting
RTM	Representative Town Meeting
STM	Special Town Meeting
TM	Town Meeting
WA	Westford Academy

Appendix A. Pros and Cons for Options

The following are lists of the major pros and cons for the three options considered by the Committee:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| • Staying with ATM | vs. | Changing to RTM; |
| • Staying with Saturday ATM | vs. | Changing to Weeknight ATM; |
| • Staying with May ATM | vs. | Changing to March ATM. |

Interestingly, some respondents gave the same problem as a con for both options. For example: “Weeknights are better; we can’t get a babysitter for all day Saturday” and “Saturday is better; we can’t get a babysitter for late weeknights.”

Staying with OTM

Pro

- Every voter is entitled to attend, speak, and vote.
- Those voters who are interested and care enough to attend get to decide.
- Voters have direct legislative power over spending and by-laws.
- OTM allows debate, sharing of views, and development of compromise solutions to issues by all voters, rather than up or down votes.
- The collective participation of voters at OTM binds the town together, fostering patience, forbearance, and tolerance of others’ views.
- Voters and Town officials are already familiar with the process.
- Few or no changes necessary to Town bylaws.

Con

- TM can be “stacked” by single-issue voting blocs.
- Ill-prepared voters can slow the pace of TM.
- Difficult to achieve and maintain a quorum for STM.
- A single venue is not available if a large percentage of the Town’s voters want to attend.

Changing to RTM**Pro**

- Ensures numerically equal representation among precincts.
- May mitigate against “stacking.”
- Town manager has an easier task communicating with a known assembly of representatives.
- Accommodates the “let the experts decide” voter mentality.
- RTM members, having chosen to stand for office, may actually stay informed and attend.
- Those voters who were truly unable to attend OTM would now be represented by their precinct members.
- A relatively fixed, informed, and committed set of representatives could make town meeting a more thoughtful, deliberative, and stable legislative body.

Con

- Citizens cannot vote directly on issues they feel strongly about.
- Voters chosen by precinct caucuses to fill vacancies may not be representative.
- Avoids responsibility for participation, deferring to “politicians.”
- Town Meeting can still be “stacked” by special interest groups—town employees, parents of school-age children, etc.—who organize to elect sympathetic candidates.
- RTM does not solve the problems cited with OTM; towns with RTM still suffer “stacking,” unprepared members, poor attendance, and attendance only for articles of interest.
- RTM members do not necessarily truly represent the views of their precinct; they can simply vote as their interests dictate.
- Little would change because the residents who now form the core attendees of OTM would simply become the core members of RTM.
- Enlarges government by creating another group of elected politicians.
- Any resident who wants to participate must run for office, entailing a commitment to communicate to precinct residents, altogether a substantially larger investment than being an OTM voter, and one that may be impractical for many.
- New bylaws governing RTM must be adopted.

Staying with Saturday ATM**Pro**

- A lengthy block of time can be devoted to TM business.
- Better continuity of warrant article deliberations than when split over several evenings.
- Does not conflict with regular Town board and committee meetings.
- Accommodates voters with typical five-day a week jobs.

Con

- Conflicts with social, cultural, religious, and recreational activities.
- Too long a period to have to sit comfortably, listen conscientiously, and vote responsibly.

Changing to Weeknight ATM**Pro**

- Sessions are shorter, more bearable.
- Sessions don't conflict with popular weekend activities.
- Shorter period to sit on bum-numbing folding chairs.

Con

- Work schedules may force some voters to arrive late or to leave early.
- Some older voters cannot drive after dark.
- Conflicts with regular Town board and committee meetings.
- Consideration of articles may be more disjointed than when considered at one Saturday session.
- Requires a small change to bylaws governing ATM.

Staying with May ATM**Pro**

- Greater confidence in State aid numbers.
- Current fiscal-year spending estimates are more accurate.
- More time to prepare budget estimates.

Con

- Voters are discouraged from attending by competing spring activities and the lure of fine spring weather.

Changing to March ATM**Pro**

- Less competition with sporting, social, and cultural events.

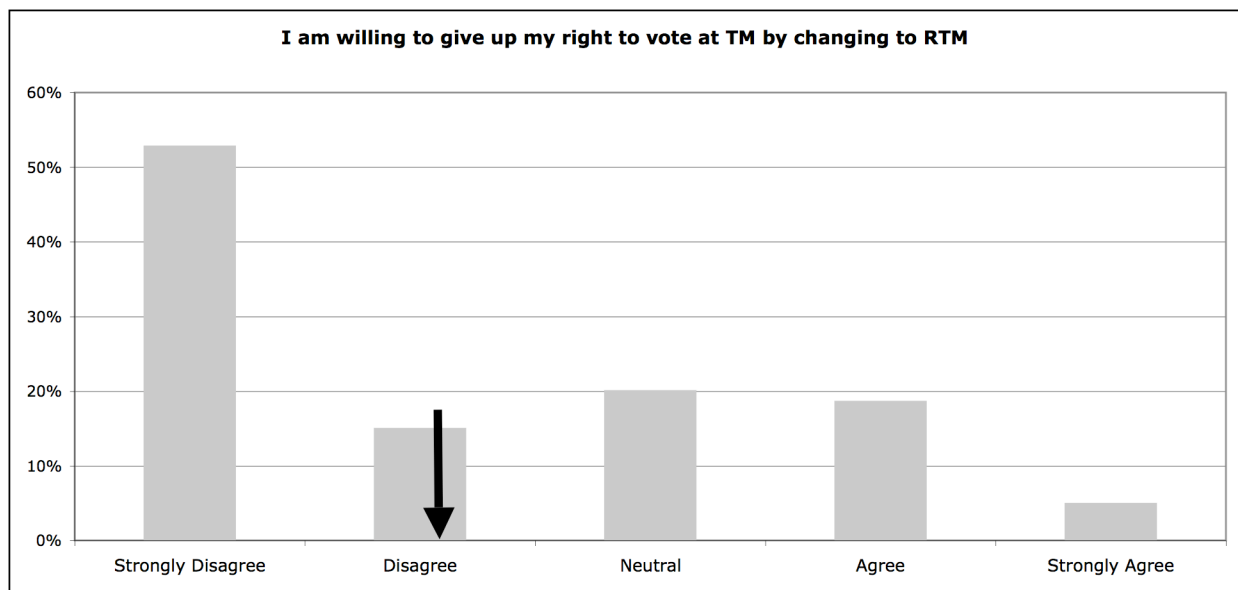
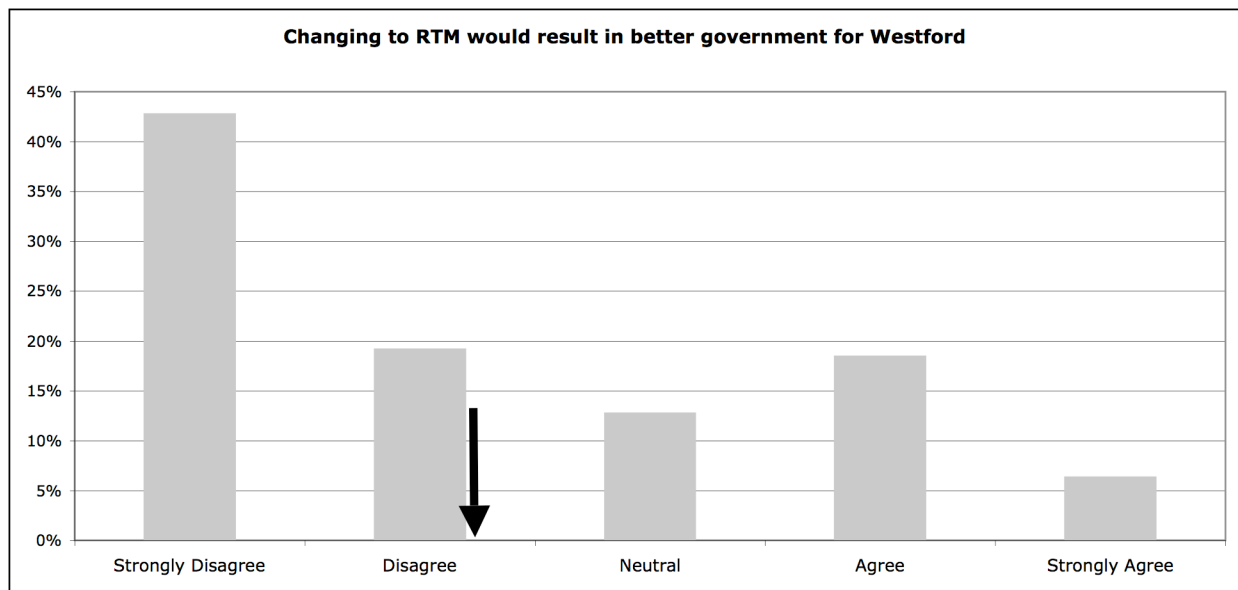
Con

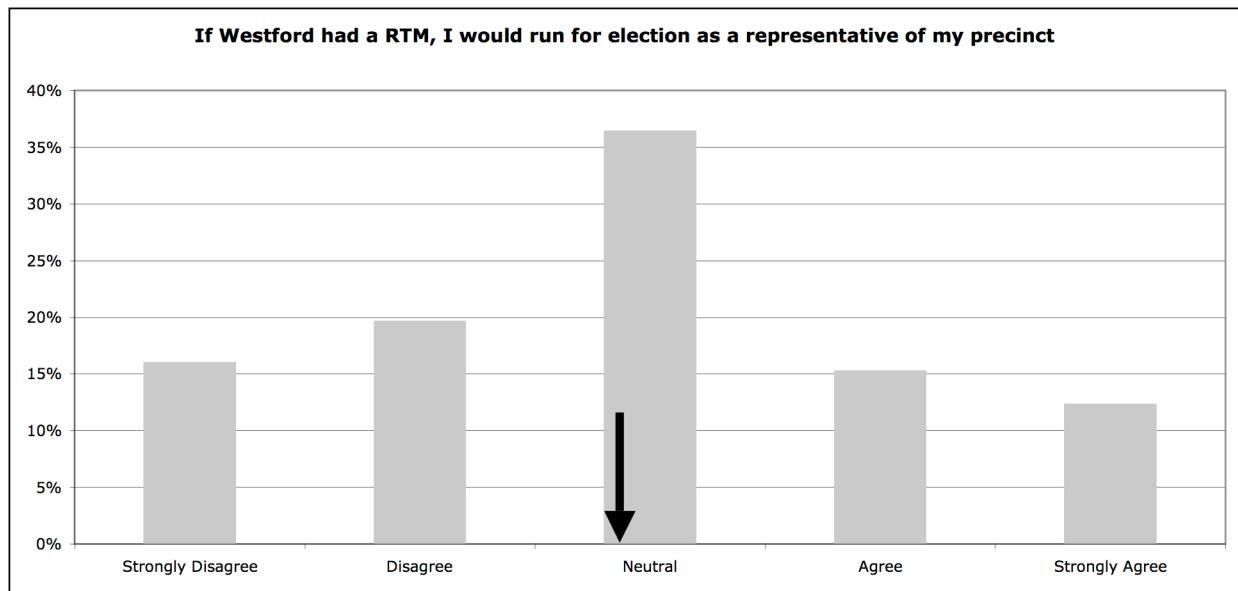
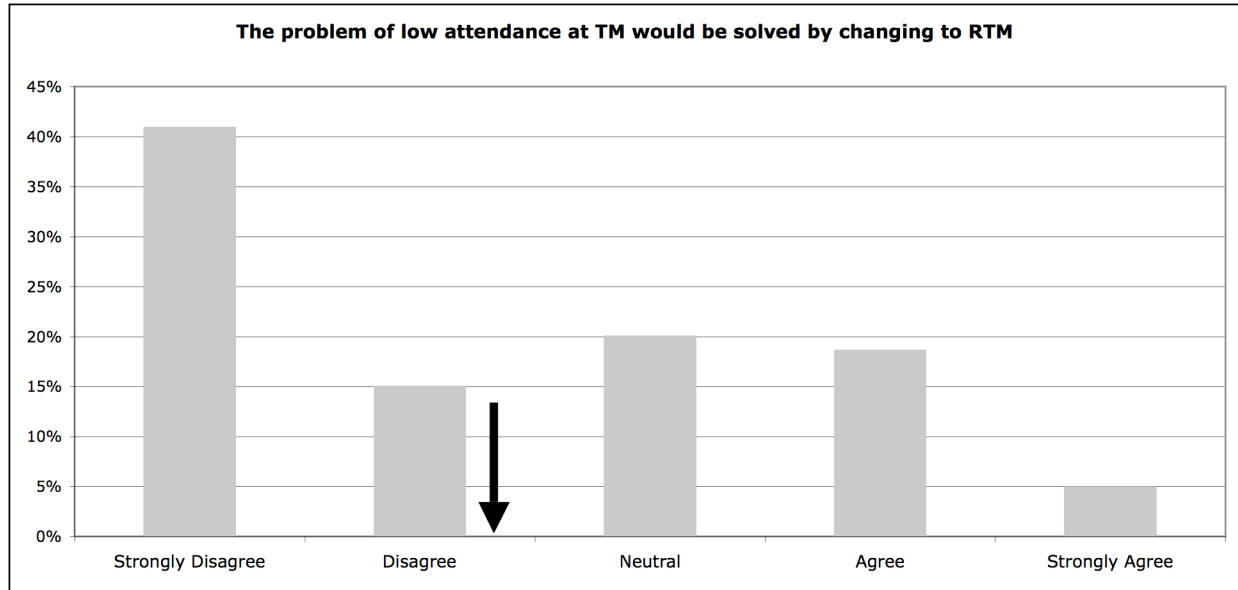
- Chance of snow or ice storm disrupting ATM.
- Local aid estimates are less reliable.
- Less time to prepare budget estimates.

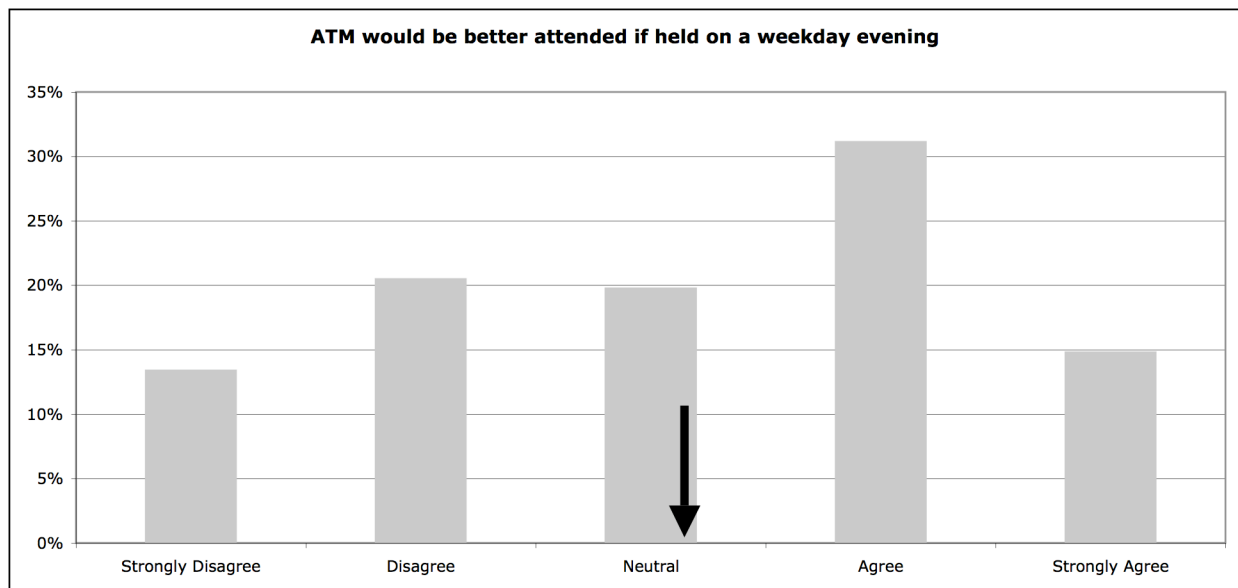
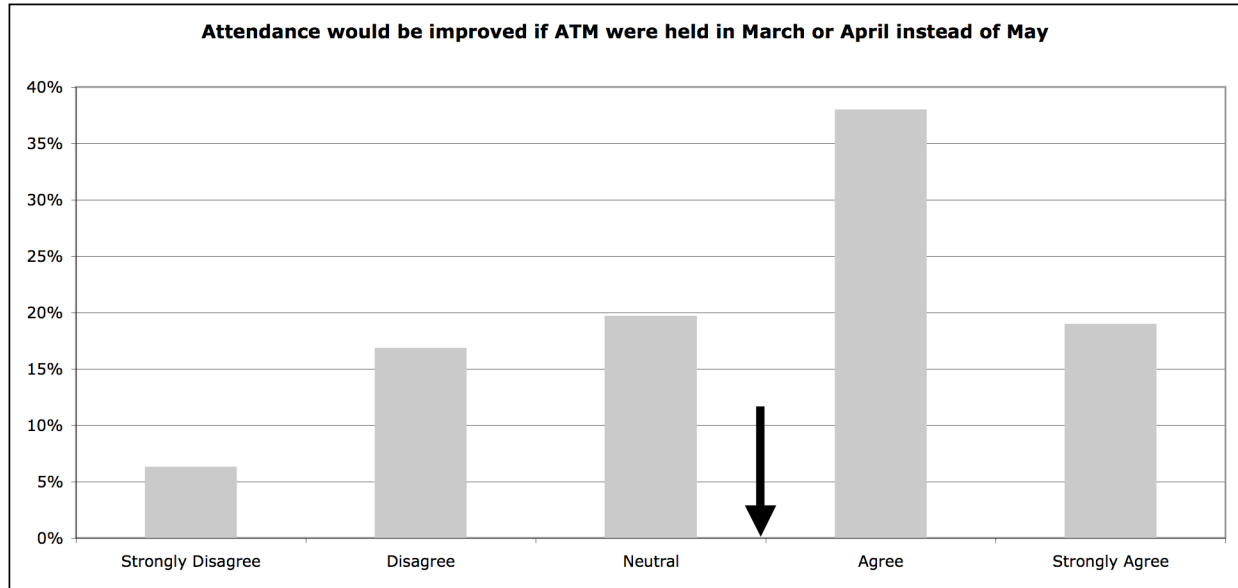
Appendix B. Survey Data

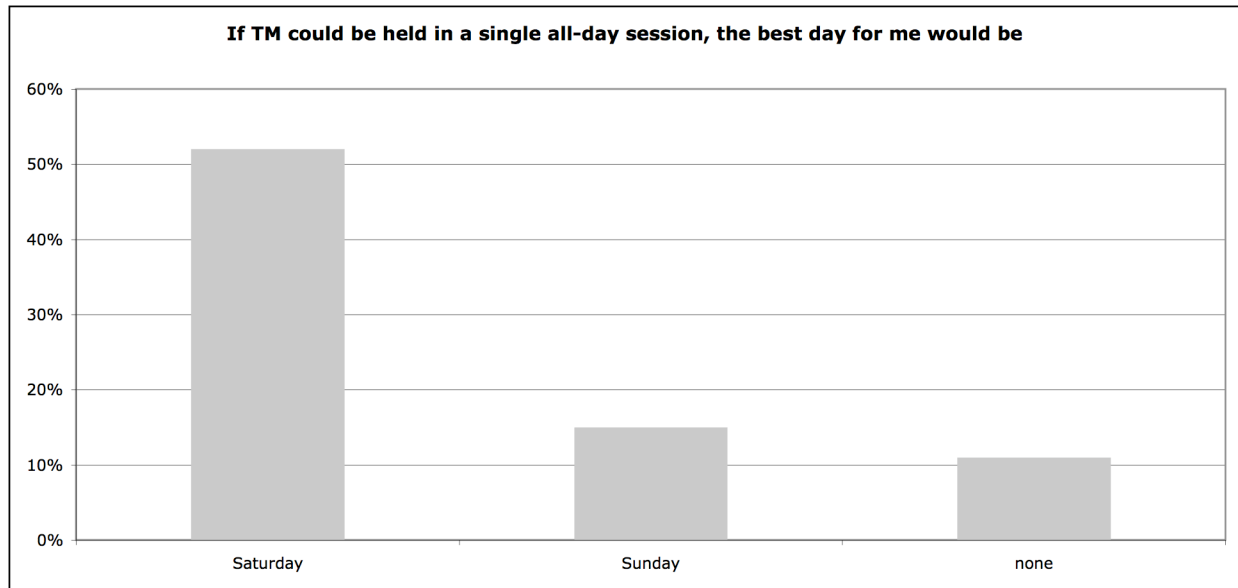
The following charts show the responses to selected questions asked in the Committee's on-line survey. Obviously, any conclusions drawn from the charts are limited to the group of 140 or so survey respondents; these results may not reflect the thoughts of the entire town since the survey sample was not chosen scientifically from the list of 14,675 registered voters.

The arrow appearing on some charts indicates the weighted average of the results where such an average is meaningful. The weights used were: strongly disagree, -2; disagree, -1; neutral, 0; agree, +1; strongly agree, +2.

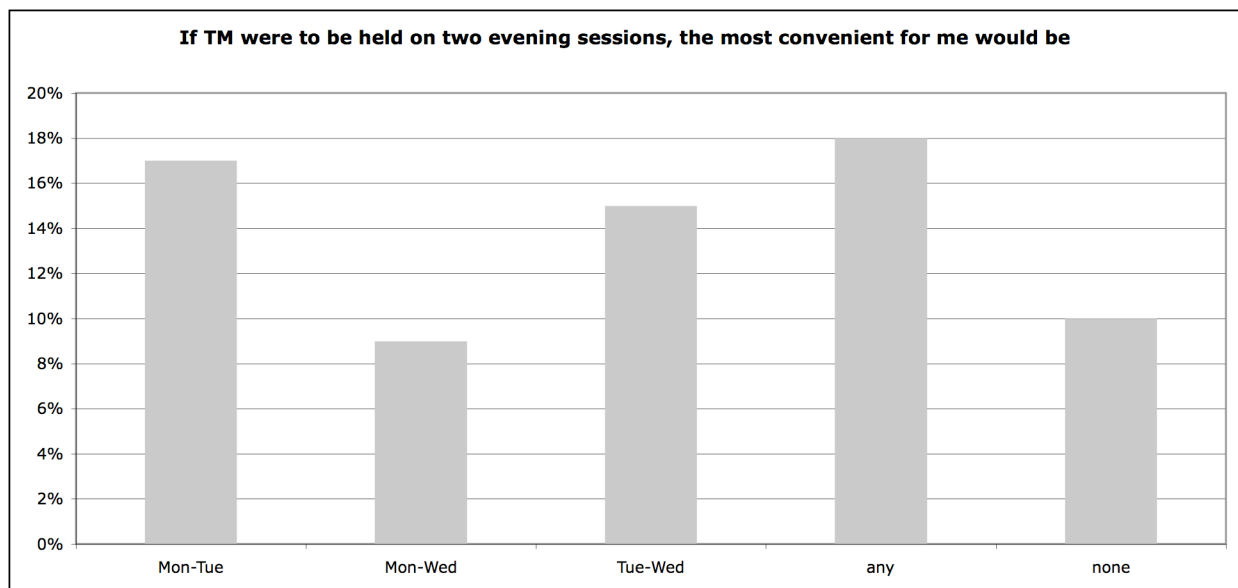








Respondents preferred Saturday to Sunday by three to one.



Respondents seemed to have no overwhelming preference for specific weeknights. (Note no respondent requested Tuesday-Thursday.)

